**Prompt 8 - Beyond what has already been shared in your application, what do you believe makes you a strong candidate for admissions to the University of California? (350 words)**

Growing up, I loved solving math riddles. I appreciated the fact that arithmetics had non-abstract, defined solutions. So when my friend invited me to a competitive programming club called Kokocoder, I was instantly interested. I believe it would allow me to pursue my passion for problem-solving from a computer science perspective. As I spent hours in the club learning, laughing, and enduring difficulties, the once-alien environment slowly turned into a place of comfort.

Throughout my journey at Kokocoder, I’ve encountered many people and been taught many lessons~~. As someone with a twin brother, I learnt not to compare myself with others,~~ and from my coaches who helped me hone my skills, I learned to accept criticism and develop a good work ethic. But one of the biggest lessons I learned came from a senior member of the club. Whenever I felt puzzled by one of the coding problems, he’d always tell me, “Start with the most ridiculous solution and see if it works. You can always simplify it later.” He’d write programs intentionally by exceeding the memory limit and later optimizing them to shorter, more complex algorithms while guiding me through each step. His method allowed me to understand the logic behind the solution first and then translate it to more effective methods achieving the same result. The community at Kokocoder taught me that there was no wrong way of pursuing knowledge, even if it meant using the most random and unconventional methods.

During my time at the club, I expanded my social circle from late-night practice sessions to partaking in memorable events like camps and field trips, which made me appreciate the opportunities I had and how privileged I was to be in an environment where I could learn alongside other enthusiastic students, enhancing my growth and long term development in programming.

At UC, I’m eager to host community events, hackathons, and mentoring programs for others including underprivileged children to help them experience the fun of programming, just like Kokocoder did for me.

35 min

Although this prompt is open-ended, I suggest to focus on two or three qualities that make you a unique candidate. Basically, how would you like them to perceive you? Your content then should reiterate and construct the image you want to convey.

Think about a quality, a value, or personality trait that you gained from joining Kokocoder. Use your activity at that club to show why that would be an asset to the UC school.

Rather than the structure you have now, I think your narrative can work better by following this outline:

1. 1st paragraph: Your intro revealed who you are pre-Kokocoder: You are a rational person who love defined solutions. Maybe you can also include how you’re the conventional type who enjoy using by-the-book approach.
2. 2nd paragraph: After joining Kokocoder, you met your senior who was your complete opposite. You became intrigued about his approach towards life: he was daring, creative, and intelligent. He mentored and showed you how to solve coding problems, and after applying his method, you realized that “there was no wrong way of pursuing knowledge, even if it meant using the most random and unconventional methods.” After learning to be more open-minded and creative, you were able to solve other problems (your relationship with your twin improved, perhaps? Or other life problems)
3. 3rd paragraph: The club also helped you hone your interpersonal skills. Before the club, you might be someone who’s (**insert personality pre-club**), but after meeting like-minded people, you became more grateful, expressive, and so on
4. Ending: provide insight into how your newfound strength or skills will help you inch closer toward your goal as a programmer and how you want to host community events to inspire others who love programming as much as you do.

Make sure to utilize this prompt to highlight any skill/value/personality traits that you haven’t mentioned in your other essays. The key here is to show yourself as a unique candidate who will enrich the diverse pool at UC.

Good luck!

Melinda